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Letter from Taizé
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Taizé
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29 December 2003
- 2 January 2004
hamburg

EUROPEAN MEETING IN HAMBURG

"Deepening Our Commitment"

Preparations for the European meeting have been undertaken for several weeks now, and the preliminary meetings offer hope that participants will encounter a warm welcome when they come.

The residents of Hamburg are fond of saying that their city has more bridges than anywhere else in Europe, and the links to others are even wider because it is a port with ties to the entire world. In addition to trade, being a port city offers a different way of looking at those who are far away or different; one finds that sharing always makes it possible to discover riches that one does not have oneself.

Some people expressed in a few words their expectations for the upcoming gathering:

"The news of the European meeting in our town and with us filled me with great joy. Immediately I imagined my parish, and all the churches of Hamburg, filled with young adults from across the world, singing the contemplative songs of Taizé. Anyone familiar with the churchgoing habits of the Protestant North of Germany knows what an extraordinary dream this is! My Lutheran parish is located in the northwest of the city. The district is a multicolored mix of old houses, newer homes, and housing projects. In the nineties, many former German emigrants returned from Russia, the same ones who participate very faithfully in the life of the congregation.

"Thanks to an active collaboration in the parish, persons from different social backgrounds meet together in many different groups: among others, there is a group for the elderly, a discussion circle for women, a group organizing meetings for men, organized recreation for children and also a choir.

"Since attending church on Sunday morning is not a priority, the parishio-

ners know almost nothing about one another and are not very acquainted with each other. In fact, the feeling of truly belonging to a community is lacking.

"In mid-May, some Taizé brothers were in Hamburg. They described the project and asked us if we were ready to welcome participants during the meeting this winter. Without hesitating, the representatives of the parish agreed immediately to do what they could to find as many people as possible to offer hospitality. It will be a daunting task for us to welcome those who will undertake this pilgrimage of trust warmly and appropriately at the end of the year. But it is precisely that task which will help us to deepen our church commitment.

"Since many of those in charge of the parish groups have already decided to take part in the welcome, the preparation of the meeting will build bridges of dialogue and understanding between the isolated groups of the parish.

"The hope of the older members is that this work of preparation will attract young people and students, so that they will realize to what extent we need them in the parish and that they can feel at home there. In May, some young people took part in the ecumenical gathering of all the Churches in Germany, the Kirchentag. Perhaps they will be the ones who will foster understanding and reconciliation among Christians.

"During the first meeting, we heard about other parishes and congregations where times of prayer using the songs of Taizé are regularly held, and we would like to begin by inviting all the different types of parishioners to take part in this prayer, as well as our neighbors from the Catholic parish."

A person in charge of pastoral work for the Catholic parishes of the city talked about the life of these communities:

"Welcome to our city, Hamburg! Beginning in the autumn we are going to do all we can to find accommodations in parishes, in individual homes and in schools. 'We' means the forty Catholic parishes in Hamburg itself as well as twenty-five other parishes in the surrounding area. 'We' is a Church made up of many different nationalities and cultures. The Catholics of Hamburg come from more than 100 different nations. We do not always succeed in making people from so many different backgrounds work together. But all the same, when we are together for worship, we have the experience of the wealth and diversity of our Church.

"In the North of Germany, a lived-out ecumenism that develops well is of paramount importance. This is true for the relationship between the two large Christian denominations, but also in the Hamburg Council of Churches, which today has thirty-one churches who are members. Together we dared to imagine and to create a church presence in Hafencity, a district of the city that is undergoing rapid growth: an ecumenical forum animated by seventeen different denominations.

"This project is called 'the bridge— ecumenical forum Hafencity.' We want to build bridges in different ways. Not just between different Christian churches, but also between the people who will live and work in this new district. Not only bridges of understanding between Christians and non-Christians, but also the desire as part of Europe to set up a living sign of the Gospel in the center of the city, together with many Christians from very different churches. Will we be able to do this, with the help of God?

"Hamburg is also a city of contrasts. There are many wealthy people, but also many poor who ask and beg for what they need each day. In the parishes, many things have been done, in collaboration with one another, in order to create a real network of charitable activity. This has particularly meant involvement with the homeless, but also with refugees. In Altona, for almost ten years now street people have been welcomed to 'Alimaus.' The experience began in 1992 in the Hamburg railway station. Since then, every Monday, tea and homemade cakes are distributed to homeless people and drug addicts. Every day more than 400 meals are served. Now, a beautiful prefabricated Finnish construction has replaced the circus caravan that was used previously. Over 100 Christian volunteers from throughout the city take turns to ensure a presence.

"Much has already grown on the foundations of the faith, but much still remains to be done. How can we go on? How can we renew the way we address each other and invite the Christian churches to get to know one another? We are very happy about the Taizé European meeting. It will be an opportunity to listen to the experience of others, to find, through sharing and discussing, new vitality and new ideas for the next steps to take. We are confident that, here in Hamburg, together with Christians of other denominations, we will manage to be good hosts for all!"

Practical Details

Arrival: Monday morning, 29th December 2003 between 7am and 12 noon.

Departure: Friday afternoon (after 12 noon), 2nd Jan. 2004

Accommodation: either with families or in school and church halls. It is essential to bring a camping mat and sleeping-bag.

General programme for **17-29 year olds**: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the Hamburg region. There will be morning prayer each day in the neighbourhood where you are staying.

Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day — midday and evening — there will be two common prayers in large halls for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon: workshops on various themes. There is also the possibility to spend the five days of the meeting in silence (separate accommodation).

Helpers/Choir (option open only to young adults between the ages of 17 and 29): Those who would like to help organise the meetings in the neighbourhoods, to be team-leaders for practical tasks or to be in the choir group, should arrive if possible on Saturday 27th December, between 8am and 3pm (arrival not possible on 28th December). Some places in these teams will also be open to participants who arrive on 29th December.

16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied throughout by an adult over 20, with each adult accompanying no more than two 16 year olds. Arrival: 29th December — not before.

Adults over 30: the meeting is intended primarily for young adults under 30 and not for older people unless they are leading a group of young people. We ask older adults (over 40) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, arriving on 29th Dec. (not before). If you cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" please indicate this when you register.

Families with children (minimum age: 7 years), and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange this.

Your contribution to costs is made on arrival. Young people from English-speaking countries will be asked to contribute approx. 80 euros for the whole meeting. [A more exact cost will be known in November.] As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass. Adults leading groups of young people can contribute the same amount, other adults over 30 are asked to contribute the double.

Also bring: a small FM radio with earphones which can receive frequencies between 88 and 108 MHz. Translations at prayer times and for many of the larger meetings will be by radio.

Travel: Special Coaches from the UK: Contact: "Skyliners", 02476 325682 / 328410; Freephone: 0500 481111; Fax: 02476 354626.
email: taizebookings@skyliners.co.uk
Or use existing rail, air or scheduled coach services to Hamburg.

From other countries: Contact Taizé in the summer/autumn to learn of groups being arranged by air and by coach.

Register by 1st December. Use the form below, or send the same information by email to: meetings@taize.fr

Information: "Meetings", Taizé Community, 71250 TAIZÉ, France
www.taize.fr email: meetings@taize.fr
Tel:(+33) 385.50.30.02 (11.00-12.00) Mon-Sat & 18.00-19.00 Mon-Fri, European time; at other times, if urgent: (+33) 385.50.30.30; Fax: (+33) 385.50.30.16

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John XXIII and Reconciliation

Exactly forty years ago, on June 3, 1963, my brothers and I learned of the death of Pope John XXIII as we were on the way to evening prayer. At once a question arose: what would become of Taizé without that beloved pope? Still today, John XXIII remains the man I perhaps venerated most on earth and who deeply marked the vocation of our community. For this reason we were very touched when, during his visit to Taizé in 1986, Pope John Paul II spoke these words: "I would like to express to you my affection and my trust with these simple words with which Pope John XXIII, who loved you so much, greeted Brother Roger one day: 'Ah, Taizé, that little springtime!'"

When a man takes on a responsibility that will call upon his energies until his dying day, often his very first intuitions show what he feels is most vital. From the outset of his ministry, in announcing a council, John XXIII offered a brand-new outlook to Christians who were separated by centuries of divisions: "We will not seek to find out who was wrong and who was right. The responsibilities lie on both sides. We will only say: let us be reconciled." To be so clear, John XXIII had to have understood well that the divisions between Christians make them less credible.

At the end of his life, John XXIII let this vision of reconciliation come to full fruition. Two of my brothers and I were witnesses to this shortly before his death, during a last long conversation we had with the pope. Aware that we would not see him again, we wanted to hear a kind of spiritual testament from his lips. John XXIII wished for us to be serene concerning the future of our community. Making circles with his hands, he explained, "The Catholic Church is made up of concentric circles that are larger and larger, always larger."

After the pope's death, we welcomed to Taizé on two occasions his youngest brother, Giuseppe Roncalli, with other members of his family. That elderly man observed everything attentively. He noticed among other things that the young people on our hill were given poor accommodations. One evening he said to his grandson, "It was my brother the pope who began what will come out of Taizé." That peasant from Bergamo had understood how much we loved his brother, and that the love was mutual.

Christ Jesus, you send your compassion on whoever comes to you in all humility and simplicity. With Blessed John XXIII, our deepest desire is to understand that what is best in our lives is built up through simple trusting in you. And even a child can do this.

Brother Roger of Taizé

LOVE OF ENEMIES

Why is love of enemies so central to the Gospel?

In the sixth chapter of Luke's Gospel, immediately after the Beatitudes, Jesus urges his disciples at length to respond to hatred with love (Luke 6:27-35; cf. Matthew 5:43-48). Situated in that context, this text shows that for Luke, love of one's opponents is what characterizes the disciples of Christ.

Jesus' words depict two ways of living. The first is that of "sinners," in other words, those who behave without reference to God and his Word. They act towards others according to the way others treat them; their action is in fact a re-action. Such people divide the world into two camps—their friends and those who are not their friends—and are good only to those who are good to them. The other way of living does not refer first and foremost to a group of human beings, but rather to God himself. God does not react according to the way he is treated. On the contrary, God "is good to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Luke 6:35).

Jesus thus puts his finger on the essential feature of the God of the Bible. Source of overflowing goodness, God does not let himself be conditioned by the wickedness of others. Even when forgotten or rejected, God continues to be faithful to himself; all God can do is love. This is true from the very beginning. Centuries before the coming of Christ Jesus, a prophet explained that, unlike human beings, God is always ready to forgive: "Your thoughts are not my thoughts and my ways are not your ways" (Isaiah 55:7-8). The prophet Hosea, for his part, hears the Lord tell him, "I will not give rein to my fierce anger... for I am God and not human" (Hosea 11:9). In a word, our God is **merciful** (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; 116:5 etc.); God "does not treat us as our sins deserve, or repay us as would befit our offences" (Psalm 103:10).

What is new in the Gospel is not so much that God is a Source of goodness, but that human beings can and should act in the image of their Creator: "Be merciful, as your Father is merciful!" (Luke 6:36). By the coming of his Son into our world as a human being, this divine Source of goodness is now accessible to us. We can become in our turn "sons and daughters of the Most High" (Luke 6:35), beings who are able to respond to evil with good, to hatred with love. By living a universal compassion, by forgiving those who hurt us, we witness that the God of mercy is present at the heart of a world marked by the rejection of others, where those who are different are despised or ignored.

Impossible for human beings reduced to their own powers, loving one's enemies witnesses to the activity of God himself in our midst. No outward commandment can make it possible. Only the presence in our hearts of divine love in person, the Holy Spirit, enables us to live in this way. This love is a direct result of Pentecost. It is not for nothing that the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:55), ends with these words: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7:60). In the footsteps of Jesus himself (cf. Luke 23:34), the disciple makes it possible for the sinister land of violence to be illuminated by the light of God's love.

Why does Saint John not speak of love of enemies?

Whereas the Gospels of Matthew and Luke emphasize the need for a love that goes beyond the circle of those who are on the same side to include even opponents, the writings of Saint John speak almost exclusively of love between the disciples of Jesus. Are we to conclude that John's outlook is more limited?

For John as for the rest of the New Testament, the mission of Jesus is universal. He is the Word of God "who shines on every human being coming into the world" (John 1:9). He came to forgive the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). He excludes no one from his love: "All whom the Father gives me will come to me, and I will not reject anyone who comes to me" (John 6:37). As "the Savior of the world" (John 4:42), Jesus offers to every human being the living water that gives life in fullness.

But the life that Christ gives is "eternal," in other words it is God's own life. It consists in a shared existence that is called **communion**. This communion is first and foremost a reality in God, the flow of life between the Father and the Son, and it is expressed on earth by a communion among human beings who open their hearts to the Gospel (cf. 1 John 1:3). Those who enter this shared life leave behind them an existence which is inauthentic because allegedly self-sufficient. In John's language, they are born of God (John 1:13; cf. 3:3-8) and are no longer "of the world" (cf. John 17:16).

To be understood correctly, John's teaching about love needs to be set in this context. For him, love is a translation "in deeds and in truth" (1 John 3:18) of this communion in God. It is thus basically **reciprocal**; the one to whom it is offered must receive it in order to give it in turn. This is true first of all in God, then in us: "As the Father has loved me, so I too have loved you: remain in my love" (John 15:10). We remain in God's love by putting the "new commandment" into practice: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34; cf. 15:10,17). In this way, the love between the disciples of Christ becomes an indubitable sign of God's presence at the heart of the world (cf. John 13:35).

If John insists so strongly on the mutual love of the disciples, then, that is not in order to restrict love to a small group of those who think along the same lines. The aim of this love is still universal, "so that the world may believe" (John 17:21,23), so that people may open their hearts to God's presence and enter the divine communion. But the only unambiguous and convincing sign of that presence and that communion is a love which is both given and received, a love "brought to perfection" (1 John 4:12; cf. 2:5; 4:17,18). This love, far from being a mere feeling, is a force that reconciles oppositions and creates a community of brothers and sisters out of the most diverse men and women; the ongoing life of this community radiates a power of attraction that can change people's hearts. For Saint John, this is how God loves the world in an effective way (cf. John 3:16)—not directly, because God cannot force anyone's heart and there is a basic incompatibility between the world that rejects God and God's love (cf. 1 John 2:15), but by placing in the midst of the world a ferment of communion, mutual love between believers, capable of penetrating the dough and causing it to rise.

SEPTEMBER

Ps 145
1 Mon God is trustworthy in all his words, and loving in all he does. God supports those who stumble and lifts up those who are bowed down.

Si 7:32-36
2 Tue Give generously to the poor, so that your blessing may lack nothing. Let your generosity extend to all the living. Do not turn your back on those who weep.

Jn 10:22-30
3 Wed Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I and the Father are one.

Heb 3:1-6
4 Thu Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and hope.

Ep 5:1-4,8-11
5 Fri Paul writes: Be imitators of God, as beloved children, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us.

1 P 1:22-25
6 Sat Peter writes: The Word of the Lord remains for ever. And this Word is the Good News that has been brought to you.

Mk 7:31-37
7 SUN Jesus took the man who was deaf and could hardly speak aside, away from the crowd. With a deep sigh, Jesus said "Ephphatha!", that is, "Be opened!". At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly.

Mt 1:18-23
8 Mon The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

Lk 5:29-32
9 Tue Jesus said: It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

2 Co 5:16-21
10 Wed St. Paul writes: In the name of Christ we appeal to you to be reconciled to God.

Col 3:1-4
11 Thu You have been raised with Christ, so set your hearts on things above. For you have died and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.

Jn 15:1-8
12 Fri Jesus said: I am the true vine. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Zc 8:7-8
13 Sat The Lord God says: Look, I shall rescue my people, gathering them from east and west. They will be my people and I shall be their God, faithful and just.

Jn 3:13-17
14 SUN God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Zc 2:14-17
15 Mon Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

Lk 9:46-48
16 Tue Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

2 Tm 1:6-11
17 Wed Paul writes to Timothy: Share in my sufferings for the Gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.

2 Co 8:1-4
18 Thu Paul writes of the first Christian communities: Throughout ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and extreme poverty overflowed in rich generosity.

Ps 119:25-32
19 Fri I run in the path of your will, O God, for you have set my heart free.

Is 43:18-21
20 Sat God says: I have put water in the desert for my people to drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises.

Mk 9:30-37
21 SUN Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wants to be first, they must make themselves last of all and servant of all.

Is 60:18-20
22 Mon God says to his people: No longer will violence be heard of in your land. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your glory.

Ph 3:7-14
23 Tue Paul writes: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Ac 5:17-33
24 Wed God has raised Jesus from the dead to make him Saviour, and through him to change our hearts and grant forgiveness of sins.

Mt 4:18-22
25 Thu Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Col 1:9-14
26 Fri God has rescued us from the rule of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have forgiveness.

Jn 14:1-12
27 Sat Jesus said to his disciples: In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

Mk 9:38-48
28 SUN Jesus said: If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward.

Is 66:12-14
29 Mon The Lord says: I am going to send peace to my people like a river. When you see this, your heart will rejoice.

Ac 26:1-23
30 Tue Paul said: I have borne witness to great and small alike, saying that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he was to proclaim a light for all nations.

Jesus, our hope, even when faced with our limits and our need, we want to realize that you love us and that your light always illuminates the road that leads to you.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

Holy Spirit, by your continual presence within us, you lead us to give our lives for love. And even if at times we forget you, you send joy upon us.

Is 49:13-15
1 Wed Thus says the Lord: Does a woman forget her child at the breast, or fail to cherish her offspring? Even if she forgets, I will never forget you.

2 Co 3:16-18
2 Thu Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Ep 3:14-21
3 Fri May God strengthen you in your inner being through the Spirit, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Ps 130
4 Sat My soul is waiting for the Lord, I rely on his promise; my soul relies on the Lord more than a night-watchman on the coming of dawn.

Mk 10:2-16
5 SUN Jesus said: Let the little children come to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Is 61:10-11
6 Mon As the earth sends up its shoots and a garden lets its seeds sprout, so God will cause justice and praise to spring up.

Is 57:14-15
7 Tue God says: My home is a high and holy place, but I am with the humble and contrite to revive their spirit.

Lk 17:3-4
8 Wed Jesus said: If your brother wrongs you seven times in a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent", forgive him.

Rm 15:1-6
9 Thu May the God of perseverance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves following the example of Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and one voice you may glorify God.

Rm 10:5-10
10 Fri The Word of God is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart.

Ws 7:7-10
11 Sat I have loved God's wisdom more than health or beauty — even preferring her to the light, for her radiance will never cease.

Mk 10:17-30
12 SUN Jesus said: Whoever leaves everything for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will receive a hundred times as much in this present age, together with persecutions, and, in the age to come, eternal life.

Is 11:1-10
13 Mon Isaiah said: God's Spirit will be upon the Messiah. He will not judge by appearances, but he will judge the weak with justice and give fair sentence for the humble in the land.

Mt 7:7-11
14 Tue Jesus said: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

2 Th 3:1-5
15 Wed May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Is 65:17-18
16 Thu The Lord says: See, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth. Be filled with rejoicing for ever, for I am creating my people to be gladness.

Mi 6:6-8
17 Fri This is what the Lord wants of you, only this: to act justly, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

Lk 12:4-12
18 Sat St LUKE
Jesus said to his disciples: When they bring you before the authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say, because when the time comes, the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.

Mk 10:35-45
19 SUN Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to save many.

Lk 12:22-31
20 Mon Jesus said: Seek first God's Kingdom, and all other things will be given to you as well.

Is 50:4-9
21 Tue God wakens my ear every morning to listen as a disciple.

Jn 1:1-18
22 Wed Of Christ, John writes: The light shines in the darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.

Rm 8:5-11
23 Thu St Paul writes: The Spirit seeks life and peace.

Ps 143
24 Fri I think of all your deeds, Lord, and stretch out my hands to you; my soul is thirsting for you like a parched land.

1 K 19:1-8
25 Sat When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

Mk 10:46-52
26 SUN Jesus asked a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

Gn 28:10-22
27 Mon The Lord says: I am with you, I will watch over you wherever you go. I will not abandon you before accomplishing what I have promised you.

Mt 10:37-42
28 Tue Jesus told those he sent out: Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

Lm 3:22-26
29 Wed God's compassion is renewed every morning; his faithfulness is great. It is good to await in silence the salvation of the Lord.

Jn 15:18-27
30 Thu Jesus said to his disciples, "My choice of you has drawn you out of the world. Remember: No servant is greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well."

Ws 3:1-9
31 Fri The souls of the just are in the hands of God and no torment can touch them.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

OCTOBER

JOHANNINE HOURS

September: Exodus 33:18-23

Among the different figures the Bible presents to us, Moses has a special place. According to the account of his call (Exodus 3:1-12), he is the first to have understood how close God is to human beings. Moses' life is changed when he learns that God is familiar with the suffering of his people who are slaves in Egypt and wants to give them a new future. The history of salvation begins, and it continues down to our day. God asks Moses to walk with his people in order to bring them out of the land of bondage. And so they leave, first crossing the Red Sea and then the desert, to go towards a land promised by God where they and their descendants can live a full life.

The Bible tells us that during this journey of liberation, Moses prays and talks with God as with a friend. One day Moses asks God, "Please let me see your glory." He wants to see the full reality of God. The difficulties of the journey and the unwillingness of the people to keep going are painful. But realizing that God wants something so good for human beings, and seeing how God does not give up trying to bring it about in spite of all the obstacles, allows Moses to come closer to God himself. Who is in fact this God who is both so near and so mysterious? Moses wants to see.

- How do the events of our life, the responsibilities we bear, change us and enable our existence to be more open to God?

God's answer (33:19) helps us understand both his beauty and his mercy. God is infinitely beautiful and he is good in a way that is unique. God says that he will pass before Moses on the mountain, but that Moses can only see his back and not his face! Moses will see God by continuing to walk behind God on the road which God has opened, by looking at him, so to speak, from the back. God is truly present on the road that leads us to a free and full life.

- Where do we see signs, perhaps very small ones, of God's beauty and goodness?
- God is truly present on the road he opens before us. How does this intuition shed light on my life?

October: Matthew 17:1-8

Midway to Jerusalem where he will be put to death on a cross, Jesus takes with him three of his closest disciples and climbs a mountain, referred to in the text as a "high mountain." You can already sense that something outside the ordinary will take place there. Jesus is changed in front of them; his face shines and his garments become like light. It is as if, for an instant, a veil is lifted and the disciples can see all of God's light shining through him.

Suddenly Moses and Elijah are present, speaking with Jesus. They too had an important meeting with God on a mountain (see the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19 and of Moses in Exodus 3 and 33). Before them are the three disciples, simple fishermen from Galilee. Peter, as usual, tries to be useful, to act, to help out. He offers to make three tents. But before he can finish speaking, a voice intervenes: "This is my beloved Son, who enjoys my favor. Listen to him." Jesus is the one who receives everything from God; he is the Father's beloved. If the road still to be undertaken is demanding, the important thing will be to listen to Jesus, to trust in his words to the very end.

- What helps us truly to listen to Christ in the Gospel? What makes it difficult to listen?
- What does it mean for me to trust in Jesus' words to the very end?

The text tells us that the disciples are frightened. As we listen to and contemplate this surprising scene, we too have reason to be dumbfounded. "Get up; don't be afraid," says Jesus. And then, once again, they see only Jesus. Even in his greatness, God does not attempt to force human beings down to their knees. "Get up," says Jesus. Jesus communicates the trust of a son, of the beloved Son, a trust that brings us to our feet. In hearing these words, how can we not think of the resurrection of Jesus and also of these other words that come from an early Christian hymn: "Sleeper, awake, rise from the dead, and Christ will be your light" (Ephesians 5:14).

- What do the words of Jesus mean to me: "Get up; don't be afraid"? What invitation do I discern in them for my own life?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Brazil

"Jornada de Confiança" in Aracaju

Once or twice a year, the Taizé brothers' who live in Brazil prepares a youth meeting in one of the major cities. All these "Jornadas de Confiança" are stages in the pilgrimage of trust on earth. Humanly speaking, leading these meetings, sometimes in the South, sometimes in the North, of an enormous country like Brazil is a challenge for a small group of just a few brothers. Yet it is wonderful challenge and each meeting brings hope to those who take part. From 1 to 4 May, the most recent of these meetings was held in Aracaju, and was prepared in close collaboration with the three dioceses of the State of Sergipe, in the North East of Brazil.

As in other meetings, all the young people coming from elsewhere were welcomed into the homes of families. The preparation that this demands and the sheer element of the unknown as the people were arriving were among the high points of the «Jornada». At the end, as people were leaving, tears could often be seen on faces not only among the young people but also among the families who had welcomed them! There were around four thousand participants, and over five thousand took part in the march for peace on the final day. The majority of the participants came from the North East, where several "Jornadas" have taken place in recent years. Around 800 came from the State of Bahia. Some came from farther afield, from Sao Paolo State, which meant traveling forty hours by bus to get there. Accompanied by a sister whose religious congregation works in Brazil, a small group came all the way from Canada. They experienced some difficulty with the heat and the humidity, but the warmth of the Brazilian welcome soon helped them get over this.

Most popular among the topics in the reflection workshops were "How can I discover my vocation?" "Praying in a simple and personal way" "What place does Jesus have in the diversity of religions?" Topics on social justice and ecology also drew large numbers.

The main part of the meeting took place in a large covered hall, oval in shape, with terracing and a huge floor in the middle. The hall was a bit dilapidated, but the acoustics were good. On one side, there was an arrangement of modern icons painted on hangings against a red background. The icons were lit by hundreds of candles. The peaceful beauty of this arrangement contrasted vividly with the appearance of the rest of the hall. It was like the serene presence of a different reality that became explicit during the times of prayer that brought everyone together.

www.taize.fr

Pittsburg USA

"What was most impressive during the weekend in East Liberty Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA, USA, was the intensity of the five prayer services. For years now, a weekly prayer in the style of Taizé has been celebrated in this church, drawing people from near and far. Once again it became obvious that when a core-group of people has been praying together for a long time, the worship takes on a life of its own and is able to draw others in".

http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgamr.htm

Among the Garo minority

"Without the help of the Church we would have lost our values and our culture," said a one of the young Garos during a recent meeting in Bangladesh. Among the workshops: "Belonging to a very small Christian minority, how can we share our faith with other people?" "What are the Garo values that must be preserved at all costs?".

http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgsa.htm

Visits in Greece

For several years now, one of the brothers has been making visits in Greece. "After the liturgy, there is a baptism. The bishop explains the rite. Addressing the tiny Vassiliki, in fact he is speaking to everyone: 'You were born from your mother's womb. Now you are going to be born of the water of baptism and of the Holy Spirit. Young Vassiliki, we are baptising you so that you may become eternal.'"

http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgeur.htm

Easter morning in Brazil

An Italian volunteer spent Holy Week at the Taizé brothers' place: "Wakened at 5.30, we all went off together through the neighbourhood to announce the resurrection... Many were touched to see us, some even wept. A woman made us come into her house, and as we left she couldn't thank us enough for the happiness we had brought her. The farther we went into the neighbourhood, the more miserable the streets became..."

http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgamr.htm

Asian Youth Day: Bangalore

One of the brothers will be taking part in the Asian Youth Day. He will be leading a prayer for peace and reconciliation on 12 August.

http://www.taize.fr/en/enplgsa.htm

Algeria

A Discreet and Faithful Presence

For the last ten years we have been in the habit of getting only sad news from Algeria: terrorist attacks, civilians massacred, natural disasters with serious consequences, and so on. Just back from a visit lasting several days to the capital city and in the East of the country, I have a very different image of the reality of Algeria. It is true that the whole country is not yet safe, and the terrible earthquake on March 21 is a national tragedy, but the meetings we were able to have bore witness to the courage and the hope that remain alive in the Algerian people.

In our visits to different towns, we were struck by the hospitality to strangers shown by all generations. "Marhaban," which means "welcome," is probably the Arabic word we heard most often during our stay. People are simply happy to see foreigners come to visit their country and show interest in their culture and traditions, thus going beyond the prejudices and the fears that are so often promoted by the media.

In Algeria, Christians represent a tiny minority of the population. Through their discreet but faithful presence, through their service, with no ulterior motives, to different strata of society, they challenge not only the inhabitants of the country where they have chosen to live the Gospel, but also Christians of other countries. We were able to visit several places where they are deeply involved with the local population: libraries, study centers, educational assistance, literacy training, work with the handicapped, choirs. In most cases, these are initiatives that were taken at the request of those who have benefited from them, and who themselves lent a hand in accomplishing the projects. In one of the suburbs of the capital, for example, we visited a parish where the priest, with help from young people of the neighborhood, fixed up the cellar of his house so that several rooms could be made available for different activities. Every afternoon, students from the nearby university campus volunteer their time to give free courses in language, mathematics and computer science; they also help the children from the nearby primary school with their homework. Often the simple fact of making a table available to high-school or university students in a study room where everyone is silent offers for those who come to work there the possibility to succeed in their studies.

Music is also a point of encounter that makes it easier to go beyond prejudices. A group of African students, several of whom were in Taizé in past years and who attend the same parish in Alger, formed a choir made up of young people from ten African countries from Algeria to Rwanda, including Cameroon and Congo. While we were there, the choir gave a concert in the very official Palace of Culture in Alger. In the invitation they sent out for the evening, they presented the meaning of their undertaking with these simple words: "For us, the Africa of Light can only be expressed through the reconciliation of the continent with itself as well as with the rest of the world." And so the title of the concert could not have been better chosen: "HOPE."

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